

Hon. John J. McGrath, Jr.  
WINDHAM-COLCHESTER PROBATE COURT (PD-28)  
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**TO:** Senate Co-Chair Catherine A. Osten  
House Co-Chair Toni E. Walker  
Senate Ranking Member Eric Berthel  
House Ranking Member Tammy Nuccio  
Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee

**FROM:** Hon. John J. McGrath, Jr.  
Judge of Probate, PD28 Windham-Colchester Probate Court

**RE:** H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning The State Budget for The Biennium Ending  
June 23, 2025, And Making Appropriations Therefor

**DATE:** February 24, 2023

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Good evening Co-Chairs Senator Osten and Representative Walker, ranking committee members Senator Berthel and Representative Nuccio; and members of the committee.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak to you tonight regarding the proposed Probate Court budgets for FY24 and FY25. My name is John McGrath. I am a resident of Windham, CT and have recently begun my thirteenth year as the probate judge for the district of Windham-Colchester. This district includes the towns of Windham, Colchester, Lebanon, Hampton, Scotland and Chaplin in Eastern Connecticut. This district is an interesting mix of small towns and small urban areas. There are five skilled nursing facilities and one community hospital. There is one judge and 3.5 dedicated staff members.

I give you this background because in addition to urging you to support the proposed probate budgets for the upcoming fiscal years, I want to give you a glimpse of the efficient and responsive system that allows the Probate Court to interact with so many residents who are often experiencing very difficult and complex issues. The Probate Court system allows the judge of each district to interact expeditiously with these residents at these crucial times. All I need is my yellow legal pad; my blue pen and in many cases my digital recorder and I can attend a hearing at a group home for a person with intellectual disability when a new guardian is needed; or attend a hearing at the hospital and obtain testimony from a staff physician when there is an immediate conservator matter; or attend a hearing at one of the skilled nursing facilities in the event of a resident who is unable to understand and make effective medical or financial decisions.

Many of us look at the Probate Court system and think that this entire web of courts and staff is here solely for the purpose of administering decedent's estates and trusts. That is an important part of the Probate Court jurisdiction but it is not exclusively, or even the majority, of what the Probate Courts are doing day-to-day. And the role of the Probate Court is expanding. In the town of Windham we have seen a rapid growth of residents, many of whom are children, who have arrived to join other family members who have settled here after fleeing their homes in Guatemala and other countries. There is now a Special Immigrant Juvenile hearing process which takes place in the Probate Court and requires the court to obtain information about the family, with the assistance of DCF, and to provide interpreters so that the family can effectively participate in the hearing.

In summary, our probate system has an important and efficient role to play in the safeguard of the rights of vulnerable residents while it also performs the ministerial duties involved in the settlement of estates and the administration of trusts. Please support the Probate Court's funding request. Thank you.